

# Safe Harbor Agreement for Chiricahua Leopard Frogs in Arizona Information Sheet

## ABOUT THE CHIRICAHUA LEOPARD FROG

The Chiricahua leopard frog is a greenish-brown frog that grows to be about 4 inches long. Until the 1970s, Chiricahua leopard frogs lived in ponds and creeks across central and southeastern Arizona, but populations have declined significantly since then. Disease, habitat loss, the current drought, and threats from species that are not native to Arizona have added to the decline of this species in our state.



*Chiricahua leopard frog*

In 2002, Chiricahua leopard frogs were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. A recovery team was created to help bring the species back from the brink. The team recently developed a recovery plan that, if implemented, will lead to removing the frog from the endangered species list. The plan includes releases of captive-bred frogs, habitat restoration, and monitoring.

The future of the Chiricahua leopard frog depends on community involvement and protecting the species on both public and private lands.



*Earthen tanks provide frog habitat*

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Chiricahua leopard frogs depend on help from private landowners, state, and federal agencies to protect and enhance habitat and to assist them in reaching stable, self-sustaining populations. A Safe Harbor Agreement (Agreement) was developed to encourage non-federal landowners to voluntarily participate in these conservation efforts for the Chiricahua leopard frog. This Agreement provides regulatory protection to landowners and their adjacent neighbors against additional regulations in the future, if they have met the conservation obligations they agreed to at the time of enrollment.

Landowners can participate in one of two ways: as a participating landowner or a participating neighbor. Participating landowners take a more active role in recovery of the Chiricahua leopard frog by creating or renovating frog habitat or establishing frog populations on their property, while participating neighbors agree to implement minimal conservation measures. If necessary, both types of participants have the option to return their property to the original state it was in prior to their enrollment in the Agreement, called the baseline condition.

If you are interested in becoming involved in Chiricahua leopard frog conservation or have questions concerning the statewide Safe Harbor Agreement to help recover this species, contact the Arizona Game and Fish Department at (623) 236-7378.

## HOW TO ENROLL

- Contact the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).
- AGFD and USFWS will survey the property to determine baseline (original) condition.
- AGFD, USFWS and the landowner will draft a Certificate of Inclusion, which will include the roles and responsibilities of participants, length of participation, and the area to be enrolled.

## PARTICIPATING LANDOWNER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Allow recovery activities that were agreed upon at the time of enrollment to take place on the property.
- Permit AGFD or USFWS personnel access to the property for monitoring.
- Submit an annual report describing any Chiricahua leopard frog management activities that took place in the preceding year, including habitat improvements or modifications, and observations of incidental take (e.g., accidental loss), etc.
- Implement the conservation activities stated in the Certificate of Inclusion. Conservation activities may include: ensuring proper stream and river function; constructing and maintaining stock tanks and ponds; and managing cattle grazing to minimize negative impacts to frog habitat.
- Prevent or minimize the introduction of non-native predators or disease into frog habitat.
- Minimize impacts to frogs from land treatments on enrolled habitat and sites with frog populations.
- Notify AGFD of any upcoming activities that might directly or indirectly impact Chiricahua leopard frogs, and discuss conservation efforts that could be employed to reduce impacts.

## PARTICIPATING NEIGHBOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Permit AGFD or USFWS personnel access to the property to collect and hold Chiricahua leopard frogs during site maintenance that may pose a threat to the frogs.
- Maintain a portion of aquatic sites to provide escape cover for frogs during maintenance activities.
- Prevent or minimize the introduction of non-native predators or disease into frog habitat.
- Minimize activities in and around aquatic sites with frogs to avoid destruction or deterioration of habitat.
- Notify AGFD of any changes or developments on the property that would impact Chiricahua leopard frogs, including removal or maintenance of an aquatic site.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q:** Who should enroll in this Agreement?

**A:** Any non-federal landowner who is interested in getting involved in Chiricahua leopard frog conservation and would like to receive assurances that no additional future regulatory restrictions will be imposed on their property beyond what was agreed to at the time of enrollment.

**Q:** What will happen if there are Chiricahua leopard frogs on my property from my participation in the Agreement and the frogs are reclassified in the future from 'threatened' to 'endangered' under the Endangered Species Act?

**A:** The Agreement provides continued assurances, or coverage, for participating landowners and neighbors who are already enrolled in the Agreement. No additional requirements will apply beyond what was agreed to in the Certificate of Inclusion.

**Q:** May I return my property to the original condition once my participation in the Agreement ends?

**A:** The primary assurance of the Agreement is the option to return the enrolled site(s) back to the baseline (original) condition at the end of the Agreement period. To do this, the participant will need to notify AGFD of their wishes and the agency will determine if a survey or salvage is necessary. If salvage occurs, AGFD will collect and translocate as many frogs as possible to a new location.



*Chiricahua leopard frog*

**Q:** Can I give my frogs to others?

**A:** No. Giving frogs to other landowners could compromise the integrity of conservation efforts and research studies of this closely monitored species. If others are interested in leopard frog conservation, they should contact AGFD or USFWS to learn more about enrolling in the Safe Harbor Agreement for Chiricahua leopard frogs.

**Q:** What if I have an emergency and need to make immediate repairs to my stock tank or pond?

**A:** Emergency situations might occur when an aquatic site is in danger of destruction or damage as a result of unforeseen circumstances. If this happens, participants may undertake immediate repair or maintenance actions at an aquatic site. The participant should report the incident to AGFD within 72 hours after the situation has occurred.



*Fenced ponds provide breeding areas  
photo credit: Brian Prescott*

**Q:** How long must my property remain enrolled in the Agreement?

**A:** Certificates of Inclusion will be issued to landowners enrolling their property in the Agreement for a minimum of 10 years. However, there are provisions in the Agreement for ending participation. The property may also be enrolled for longer periods, if the participant wishes. Participants will agree to the duration at the time of enrollment, when establishing commitments on the Certificate of Inclusion. Participants may also renew their enrollment prior to the original enrollment expiration.

**Q:** What if I sell my property?

**A:** The participating landowner or participating neighbor is required to notify AGFD within 60 days of a sale or transfer of any property enrolled under the Agreement. The new owner will have the option of enrolling in the Agreement at that time or coordinating with AGFD to have the property taken back to baseline condition.

**Q:** How will this Agreement affect the transfer of the property to my heirs?

**A:** The heirs should notify AGFD within 60 days of the transfer of the property. At that time, the heirs may enroll in the Agreement with the original baseline condition or coordinate with AGFD to have the property taken back to baseline condition.

**Q:** What if I need to end my participation early?

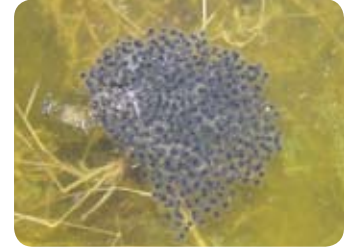
**A:** Participants may terminate or reduce their conservation commitments prior to the enrollment period expiration. Participants who wish to terminate their enrollment early will need to provide a written notice to AGFD and schedule when the property will be taken back to baseline condition.

**Q:** What will the annual monitoring consist of?

**A:** AGFD personnel or representatives will conduct compliance monitoring at the enrolled site a maximum of two times per year (minimum of one visit per two years). Additional surveys may be necessary to monitor how well the frogs are doing. The monitoring personnel will notify the landowner at least 14 days prior to the visit and will arrange a time that meets the landowner's schedule and needs.

**Q:** What will my reporting responsibilities be?

**A:** By February 1 of each year, each participating landowner and neighbor will submit a report to AGFD that describes activities under the Agreement for the preceding year. The report will include any Chiricahua leopard frog management activities implemented during the preceding year, including stock tank improvements; funding sources that were used in the preceding year or expected to be obtained in the following year; any incidental take of frogs known or suspected to have occurred and an explanation of the reasons for the take; and any other pertinent information regarding the status of the Agreement's conservation program or implementation of the program.



*Frog egg mass*

## For more information

**Recovery Plan:** [www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Documents/SpeciesDocs/CLF/Final\\_CLF\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Documents/SpeciesDocs/CLF/Final_CLF_Plan.pdf)

**Safe Harbor Agreement:** [www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Documents/Safe%20Harbors/CLF/AZ%20CLF%20SHA.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Documents/Safe%20Harbors/CLF/AZ%20CLF%20SHA.pdf)



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